

Magnification and Minimisation

When a person experiences an unhelpful emotion (eg, depression or anxiety), it is usually preceded by a number of unhelpful self-statements and thoughts. Often there is a pattern to such thoughts, and we call these, "unhelpful thinking styles".

One of the things we have noticed is that people use unhelpful thinking styles as an automatic habit. It is something that happens out of our awareness. However, when a person consistently and constantly uses some of these styles of thinking, they can often cause themselves a great deal of emotional distress.

One of these thinking styles is called "magnification and minimisation" When you use this binocular style of thinking, you ignore the positives about yourself, discounting them as though they are not important. In this way you might 'water down' positive experiences, and even transform them into negative ones. It's as though you're being so humble, you're putting yourself down.

This is the binocular effect on thinking. Often it means that you enlarge (magnify) the positive attributes of other people and shrink (minimise) your own attributes, just like looking at the world through either end of the same pair of binoculars. Disqualifying your own attributes for achievement has negative effects.

Think of the times in your own life where you might have said, or heard others say, "Oh, that doesn't count, I was just lucky", or "They don't really mean it, they were just being polite".

Can you think of a situation where you have used this thinking style?

Briefly describe the situation.	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?